

THE SETTING

leads into the room used for the storing of grain and various household goods. At the end is a small room, and here are lodged the gods and deities of the household.

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Although small variations are sometimes seen in the internal arrangement of this type of dwelling, the principles of construction are generally everywhere the same. The walls are made of local stone, which is available at very cheap rates; the doors and their frames are fashioned by the local carpenter and are often decorated on the outside with carvings of geometrical designs and occasionally human or animal figures. The walls are plastered with mud and washed with coloured earth. Almost all the rooms have mud floors; the roofs are always tiled. The Bhawanti type of house is the house of the well-to-do cultivator as well as that of the more substantial people belonging to the occupational castes. Although the houses of the Muslims, both cultivators and traders, as well as of Hindus with urban contacts, conform to the general pattern of the Bhawanti, they show certain marks of sophistication which are obviously the result of urban influences. Such houses have whitewashed walls and stone floors, and many, especially those of the Muslims, have pit-latrines in the backyards. The outer walls are often decorated with motifs borrowed from the city.

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The furniture in this type of house is very meagre. In some houses there are a few hard wooden chairs, crude benches and stools or perhaps folding chairs with canvas seats. A popular item of furniture is the wooden *takht*, a large, portable wooden platform, rectangular in shape and supported on four legs. It is about two feet high and seats four to eight people. The other common article of furniture met with in the village is the bedstead, on which the meagre bedding is spread. Rich people have a large framed bedstead which is often ornamented. It is known as *palang*. But poorer people use the small-framed *charpoy* or *khat* woven with locally made thin hemp ropes.

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It has been pointed out earlier that the average rural house of this type is often embellished with carvings on the doors. Moreover the walls are generally decorated with designs or human or other animal figures. Cheap prints of Hindu gods and goddesses or family photographs taken by street photographers in the city decorate the walls in some of the houses. The more educated people and retired petty officials sometimes possess clocks, but

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353 these are generally out of order and are used rather as decorations than to tell the time.

415 Household utensils are generally made by the local potter. But
[556] shining brassware, including a few large pots for storing water, are a mark of respectability. Food is served on brass, bell-metal or aluminium plates. Water is drunk from metal mugs or brass beakers. In some houses a couple of china cups and saucers and a few glass plates are also to be seen.

342 *The Penkutillu.* This type of house is smaller and less ostentatious,
351 and is built by average cultivators with small holdings, who are neither rich nor poor according to village standards. These houses also have a courtyard and possibly a backyard; a verandah and two or three rooms which are used for various purposes. The walls are of stone, the floor of mud and the roof is tiled. The cattle-shed is generally close to the living-room and there is neither latrine nor bathroom in the house.

352 This type of house is also decorated with carvings on the doors,
353 and designs are painted on the wall. In such houses furniture is regarded as a luxury; there may be a few bedsteads, some small
415 wooden stools and possibly a crude chair or two. People with city contacts decorate the walls of their houses with commercial calendars or coloured magazine covers. The household utensils in this type of house are, except for metal plates used for serving food, of
[556] earthenware, even water being stored in clay pots. Yet respectability demands that such a house should have at least some brass utensils. These are greatly coveted by the ambitious housewife.

342 *The Gudse.* These are the commonest type of dwellings found in Telangana, and are indeed the most numerous in Shamirpet. The walls of these huts are either made of mud or they are made of wattle-screen and plastered with mud. The roof is always thatched. The hut is built in a small enclosure and has generally only one
352 room, from which the kitchen is partly partitioned. These huts have
415 very little furniture and all household utensils are the wares of the local potter. The few metal utensils which the family possesses are among the most treasured parts of the household property.

351 All the three types of village dwellings have some features in
[515] common. Almost all of them have some open space either at the front or at the back. This is generally enclosed. Here women bath and in times of emergency, such as illness or other incapacity, it may also be used as a latrine. During the rainy season

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it is used for the growing of vegetables, specially fruit-bearing 351
 creepers, and throughout the year it is used by the household fowls.
 Similarly, in most of these houses the cattle-shed is very close to 343
 the main living-room. Hardly half a dozen houses in the village [514]
 have latrines; the majority of the people go out into the fields or
 behind the rocks for answering the call of nature. Notwithstanding [353] ●
 some variety, the decorative designs found on all the houses follow
 a generally established pattern. The floors are swept twice every
 day in almost all the houses. The mud floor is periodically smeared [356]
 with cow-dung mixed with water and the walls are washed
 annually with lime or coloured earth. Grain and provisions are [251]
 stored in large receptacles made either by the potter and well
 burnt to a vermilion red or by the Erkala in their traditional
 styles of basket-work.

All the houses in Shamirpet can be classed into one of these three 342
 types. The Gudse-type huts of the Erkalas are, however, a class
 by themselves. These small, circular huts, made from sheets of 351
 weed-matting, are about twenty feet in diameter and are often
 only six feet high. The interior is unpartitioned and serves as
 bedroom, dining-room, living-room and kitchen. Pigs and poultry
 are housed in similar but smaller round huts built in the immediate
 vicinity of the dwelling-hut.

From time to time groups of families belonging to the nomadic [221]
 castes come to the village. These have their low, portable huts,
 which are mostly made of folding bamboo screens. Almost every
 month some group belonging to this category makes its appearance
 in Shamirpet and after a stay of a week or so moves off with its
 huts, dogs and pigs.

5. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF SHAMIRPET

The nearness of Shamirpet to the cities of Hyderabad and 621
 Secundrabad has been mentioned. People holding small govern- [574]
 ment posts or having urban relations make periodic visits to the
 city. Others, especially young men, cycle down to Secundrabad or
 Hyderabad to visit the cinema or to look at the shops.

In the broad social sense, however, Shamirpet's more intimate
 ties are with the villages in the neighbourhood. In the events and
 developments of these villages the people of Shamirpet are very
 keenly interested. The hamlets of Babugura and Upparpalli are